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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
21 June 1967

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Withdrawal of UNEF: A Note on the Dispute over the Good Faith Accord

1. Hammarskjold's personal memorandum for the record of 5 August 1957, dealing with his negotiations with the Egyptians on UNEF, throws light on the meaning of the "good faith" accord approved by the General Assembly on 24 November 1956. It is, however, only the accord itself which has any legal or official status.

2. The "good faith" accord would seem to commit the UAR not to ask for the withdrawal of UNEF except upon the completion of its task. Hammarskjold's memorandum simply underlines that this, indeed, was the intent of the accord.

3. The question is, what task? The accord was made in the wake of the General Assembly resolution of 5 November 1956 which defined the task of UNEF as being "to secure and supervise the cessation of hostilities." A later GA resolution, that of 2 February 1957, gave UNEF's task as that of seeing to the "scrupulous maintenance of the armistice agreement."

4. In his statement of 19 June 1967, Thant takes the position that these two tasks are considerably different, that the first was completed when UNEF replaced the forces of France, Israel, and the UK in 1956 and hostilities ceased, and that the "good faith" accord "could not possibly have envisaged or have had any relevance to the later function defined for UNEF by the General Assembly in February 1957." It is difficult to share Thant's view. The work of the UNEF has been all of a piece, having as its consistent purpose to suppress hostilities in the Egyptian-Israeli area.

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5. The continued relevance of the "good faith" accord in the Egyptian-Israeli situation is evidenced by several facts. When Egypt accepted the agreement of 8 February 1957 on the status of UNEF in Egypt, it made explicit reference to "the declaration of the Government of Egypt that, when exercising its sovereign powers on any matter concerning the presence and functioning of the United Nations Emergency Force, it would be guided, in good faith, by its acceptance of the General Assembly resolution of 5 November 1956...." Obviously Hammarskjold, when he wrote his memorandum on 5 August 1957, thought the "good faith" accord was highly relevant and important for the future. He particularly wanted to record Nasir's acceptance of the Secretary General's position on 17 November 1956.

6. That Thant, too, regarded the Egyptian acceptance of the "good faith" accord as having continuing relevance and validity is attested by the fact that he gave an aide-memoire, incorporating the "good faith" accord, to El-Kony on 17 May 1967, and repeated the text in his report to the General Assembly the next day.

7. The fact is that Thant put the greatest emphasis on that side of Hammarskjold's position that acknowledged that Egypt had a sovereign right to demand the withdrawal of UNEF. He apparently set little store by Hammarskjold's position, reflected in the text of the "good faith" accord, that Egypt had practically promised not to exercise its sovereign right in this respect until the UN agreed that UNEF had completed its task.

8. It may be contended in Thant's behalf that he took a pragmatic view, feeling that there was little that could be done if the UAR wanted to go back on its promise. Unquestionably the fact that UAR forces had variously surrounded, moved ahead of, and ousted some of the UNEF posts on 17 May weighed heavily in Thant's estimate of the situation. He saw that, as a practical matter, UNEF could not function in these conditions. But if UAR forces had been ordered into advanced positions, they could also have been ordered back.

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9. There would seem to have been a possibility for Thant to have appealed to Nasir, on the precise basis of the "good faith" accord, not to scuttle UNEF at a time when the danger of conflict was high. Hammarskjold had forseen the possibility that Cairo might turn its back on the accord, but in that event it would, in his words, "break the agreement with the United Nations." Hammarskjold would hardly have kept mum about such a development. Thant had the option, which he did not use, of making the real state of affairs public, and trying to mobilize world opinion on his side.

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